

Dollar coins would save U.S. millions a year, if. . .

By Roger Boye

After several months of study, a government agency has concluded that Uncle Sam could save nearly \$320 million a year by replacing the \$1 "greenback" with a circulating dollar coin.

But the General Accounting Office also said that the coin would flop—as did the Susan B. Anthony dollar a decade ago—unless officials did the following:

- Produced a dollar that was clearly distinguishable from other coins and acceptable to the vending-machine industry;

- eliminated the \$1 Federal Reserve note and were prepared to handle public resistance to the switch, and

- allowed for a reasonably short transition period while conducting a sophisticated public-awareness program.

"The primary obstacle to the coin's success would be the difficulty Congress and the administration would have to reach an agreement to impose the coin on the public by eliminating the one-dollar note and maintain a resolve not to reverse the decision, even if public reaction is negative, which we expect it will be," said the GAO report released late last month.

In October, a House subcommittee asked the GAO to conduct its study following introduction of legislation that calls for dollar coins to replace \$1 bills. The coin design would symbolize the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.

Although each dollar coin would cost 6 cents to produce, compared with 2.6 cents for a dollar bill, the coin's durability would make it less costly in the long run.